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ROSAMOND HOWARD.

BY

KATIE R. LOVELACE.

"Let lower spirits linger
For hint and beck and nod ;
She always sees the finger
Of an onward urging God."



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TO MY MOTHER

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THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

Fact and fancy interwoven.

The stern and pleasing realities of life ; with the ideal
life beyond.

K. R. L.

ROSAMOND HOWARD.

CHAPTER I.

“God taught me to read ;
He lent me the world for a book.”

FAR away from the world's busy tumult, where only an occasional echo of its noisy din trembled at times along the breezy mountain-tops, and was lost mid the silence of nature's solitude, barren and rugged hills lifted their heads heavenward, as in stern defiance of man's power to make or mar ; and sterile fields gave back a scanty harvest for the laborer's toil.

Upon one of the lesser hills, where rude culture had done its best to eradicate the defects of nature, stood a farm-house, a low rambling building of somewhat modern structure, where Rosamond Howard spent many of her early years.

Had you have seen her upon the eve our story opens, sitting in the low doorway, the glow of the summer sun-

set glimmering around, below, above her, you would have called her a most ordinary looking child. No dimpled form, or tinted hues on cheek or lip, no merry light of happy childhood lingered on her face, but a sad, pitiful little face it was that turned to the glowing sunset. The great blue-gray eyes, one of her redeeming features, glowed and dilated as she watched the changing beauty of sky and woodland ; beauty, such as pencil of artist never yet drew down to earth.

The little heart heaved with repressed emotion, and out of the rich brown hair that in the sunlight catches so many changing hues, gleamed the high broad brow like marble in the fading light ; a brow that promised a rare harvest of high and holy thought in her coming womanhood. The sweet mouth, round which the firm lines even then began to gather, quivered as if with pain, and the little close-clasped hands expressed, perhaps, more fully the sensitive, highly wrought nervous temperament that would be a blessing or a curse all life through.

O ye mothers, clasp close these little sensitive, spiritual natures given you to guard and guide ; watch over them with a tenderness akin to the Divine Master's ; for in the days that are coming, amid the discords, the dis-

appointments of life, these are the hearts that will quiver and ache with untold pain. Happy such who in their early years the tender Shepherd gathers home.

Evening after evening she sat in the low doorway, while the sunset glowed and faded in the western sky; thinking, wondering what scene lay over the distant mountain-tops where the glowing sun had disappeared; was the world over there like the world she lived in? Oh, no! it must be a brighter, far more beautiful one, and her heart glowed with the thought that when she became a woman she would go and see for herself; yet it seemed such a long while to wait, for only twelve years had the summers bloomed and faded around her.

As the light faded on the horizon, she turned her eyes toward the lumious lights that ever gleam like jewels in the dark blue cave above. As she viewed their silvery radiance sparkling above her an expression of gladness flitted across her face, and reaching her arms upward as if she would clasp them in her embrace she softly murmured, "My diamonds, my beautiful diamonds!"

Ah, yes! little one, more beautiful diamonds than ever decked a monarch's crown, and they are yours, all yours.

“Rosamond, come in and shut that door,” the harsh voice of her aunt called from an inner room.

The girl started as if some one had struck her, the gladness swiftly died out of her face, and her eyes flashed as in sudden anger, as she arose and quickly closed the door. Taking a candle which stood waiting for her on the table, she flitted away up the dark stairway that led to her attic room.

After performing her simple toilet and asking the blessed Jesus to forgive and watch over her another night, she fell asleep, and her soul, in its mysterious travels, roamed at will among the beautiful stars she loved so well.

Perhaps sentinel angels kept guard around her with unwonted care, for Rosamond had never known the deep tenderness of a mother's love.

Few were the words of affection that greeted her ear—only God knew why—and the little heart that should have been opening like a beautiful flower in the sunlight of love was even in these early years learning the sad hard lesson of repressing her natural feelings.

Her aunt provided her all the bodily comforts of life ; its luxuries she could not afford. Conscience would not allow of her doing otherwise by her dead sister's child ;

but she forgot the little sensitive, starving heart and soul—starving for sympathy and love. She was a woman who had lived through much disappointment and sorrow, and instead of making her a tenderer, nobler woman, she had allowed it to corrode her heart and life, until harsh, unkind words had become a perpetual habit with her.

Rosamond's uncle, a man of few abilities, although possessing a good kind heart, had long ago given up all hope of a happy home, such as he had pictured in his far-away youth, and had learned to find comfort in his homely duties, and forgetfulness in sleep. Yet his eyes often lingered in pity upon the child growing up in the unwholesome atmosphere of such a home.

He often thought of the little one who had just learned to lisp "papa," ere the angels came, one morning when the dew lay heavy on flower and shrub, and bore him away toward the eastern light; and although he missed the patter of little feet and the clasp of chubby arms, and knew when old age should overtake him there would be no strong young arm to lean upon, looking upon the sad face of little Rosamond, out of the great unselfishness of his heart, perhaps he was glad that it was so.

Years before Rosamond's mother had married a man of culture and refinement, whom she had met at her uncle's

city home, where she was making a transient visit ; and although misfortune followed close upon their love dream, and poverty, that wolf which howls around the door of so many homes, made sad havoc in theirs, through all faith and love never faltered.

But a few months after the young mother kissed her new born babe and fell asleep, her head pillowed low in the dust, the father was laid by her side ; and little Rosamond was all that was left of the bright brief dream, and her aunt had taken her to her country home, where she had grown up amid the stern aspects of nature.

CHAPTER II.

“Thou hast learned the woes of all the world,
From thine own longings and lone tears.”

THE morning dawned clear and beautiful.

Soft mists lay on hill and valley to drift away ere long into the azure sky and leave the earth sparkling with dewy gems, which reflected the sunlight in myriad tiny rainbows.

The sweet voices of birds chanting their morning hymns alone broke the stillness, but they roused Rosa-

mond from her dreams, and she quickly arose and hastened down to help her aunt with the morning work, but occasionally looked wistfully out of door or window, for she loved to watch the soft mists rise and, dividing into fleecy clouds, float away into unknown skies, like boats with gleaming sails drifting away into unknown waters.

She hastened with her morning tasks, and preparing her noon lunch in her little basket, started for school.

Her way for a half mile lay through the deep woods. She loved its solitude, loved to watch the tiny squirrels winking their eyes at her, then darting away; loved to listen to the voices of birds, each singing his own peculiar notes, but blending above the tree tops in one sweet harmony. There was the old log with its mossy seat, where she often rested on her return at the close of the day; and the babbling brook telling strange tales of its far away home in the hills; how the painted Indian, of which she had read, and whose sorrowful story always touched her heart, had drank from its cooling waters; how the deer had leaped its banks and sped away; the bear with his wild companions had prowled along its mossy slopes; and after greeting her it was going on—and on—through stranger sights and sounds, out into

that great world, perhaps, of which she dreamed, going to meet the eternity of waters. Wonderful were the tales that brook used to tell.

In after years, when the world with its sights and sounds were around her, mid its strife and busy cares, her thoughts would return sometimes to the hush of those deep woods. The sweet breath of its ferns seemed again to linger around her, the piping of wild birds echoing in the air, the brook babbling its story again, and the remembrance was like a benison of peace.

The school house was at the top of a long hill which lay beyond the woods, and the sun's rays almost seemed to scorch the little tired figure climbing its long stony road.

The school house was an old weather-beaten building, with rude desks running all round it, marred by hieroglyphics of mischievous school boys through several generations. Here Rosamond spent day after day, learning the rudiments of knowledge.

Summer's heat or winter's cold always found her in her accustomed place, with her little sad face bent over her books; her thirsty mind drinking knowledge in such deep draughts, that the common minds around her were left far behind.

Sometimes when a new teacher filled the desk and selected her favorite, as all teachers will, the choice was usually some pretty mischievous elf, and the little sad face of Rosamond passed by ; but as the weeks passed away the wonderful intelligence of those gray eyes began to dawn upon the teacher, awakening at first a deep interest, then respect and love, and a strong desire to help the little thirsty soul onward.

Often in after years Rosamond stood by and saw the pretty dimpled favorites loved and caressed ; while she, cut to the heart, passed unnoticed ; yet some, observing the wonderful light of those blue-gray eyes, learned to love and respect her with the deepest homage.

There were times when the sorrowful shadow seemed lifted from her face, and the sunlight of joy beamed from every feature, making her almost beautiful, and while it lasted the wildest, gayest of them all was Rosamond ; but this was seldom, for her earnest eyes looked too deep into the depths of life to sport long on its surface.

Thus the years went by with no outward change in Rosamond's life ; yet, all unknown to those around her, behind the little sad face a soul was groping for the light, striving to touch if it were but the hem of that shining garment passing by ; listening for the lowest whisper of that tender voice saying " forgiven."

For months the struggle went on, and none knew or guessed it, until at last the little hand lay trustingly in the nail-pierced palm of Calvary, never to unclasp until within the pearly gates of Paradise.

And it was about this time the gift of song burst its fetters (was it a blessing breathed upon the child by the Holy Spirit?). Its first notes trembled along the mountain tops to be heard, perchance, in after years by listening worlds afar.

It came like a great joy to Rosamond, and proved a source of pure delight all life through.

CHAPTER III.

“There is a divinity doth shape our ends,
Rough hew them as we will.”

WHEN Rosamond was about fifteen years old, her uncle was taken sick, and for weeks he lay on the couch, as he said, resting, in the large airy room which served as dining and family room; but each day his face grew paler, and the weary look grew deeper.

Rosamond brought the ferns and flowers she gathered on the hillside and tastily arranged them on the table

beside him. He always thanked her with a pleased smile, and would watch her flitting in and out of the room as if he loved to have her near, and her cooling hand often bathed his aching brow and eased the dull pain there.

One day when she came in, her hands loaded with her woodlawn treasures, her uncle called her to his side, and stroking the rich brown hair which the playful winds had blown into confusion about her face, he said, "Rosamond, only a little while and I shall be gathering the fragrant flowers that bloom in the garden of Paradise."

"O, uncle!" exclaimed Rosamond, in surprise.

"Yes, little one, I feel my strength declining every hour. Each day I can discern more clearly through the mists the domes and pinnacles of our Master's palace, and soft whispers linger on the air like melodies breathed by angel singers. But a few more mornings will the sun rise and set ere, my little one, you will be a second time orphaned. I have tried in my feeble way to be kind to you, tried to shield you what I could from the curse which has made my life so unhappy, but I see traces of it on your little sad face which will linger there for years."

The sensitive heart of Rosamond thrilled with emo-

tion as she listened to her uncle's words, and the tears streamed from her eyes as she said, "Uncle ! dear uncle ! do not leave me. O, if I only might go with you !"

But with the prophetic vision often given those nearing the portals of eternity, he said, "No, little one, it will be long years yet before the Master will say to you 'come,' and there are bitter trials before you—heart struggles and much sorrow ; but I see a brave, strong soul looking out of your eyes ; a soul that clinging to Divine help will bear and conquer, ay, even unto death ; and the feeble efforts of my life appear beside it like the frail attempts of an infant. Go now, little one, and may God bless you, for I would be alone awhile."

These were the last words Rosamond ever heard him utter, for that night a little shining form stood by his bedside, and a chirping voice said, "Come, papa," and clasping the little hand, together they floated away into the misty blue depths above, and another soul was free.

Soon after, Mrs. Dean, Rosamond's aunt, sold her farm and removed to the village of Lee, about three miles distant ; for a farmer's life had always been distasteful to her.

Perhaps she missed the patient care which had been

around her so many years, and longed to get away where memory could not reproach her so forcibly.

She rented a small cottage near the outskirts of the village, and here began a new life for Rosamond. Her mind had long felt cramped in the old school-house on the hill, and the privileges passed so idly by the boys and girls of the village, opened before her like a vista of delight.

Oh, the hoards of knowledge in that village library, and the white school building, with its green blinds and pleasant yard, like things of which she had dreamed.

The shy little maiden with the sad face and wonderful eyes, who came and went so quietly among them, was quite a curiosity to the youths and misses of the village.

Rosamond soon found that her new life had its bitterness, for the evil spirit which always possesses school children to torment every new comer, soon manifested itself toward her, and the jeers of thoughtless boys and slights of the girls were a source of severe trial to her; often the tears would start, but oftener her eyes would flash in sudden anger, and with a proud haughty demeanor the little figure would walk away.

Rosamond made a great struggle to hold the passionate, haughty temper in check. Often, oh, how often, it would overwhelm her, and the passionate words would fall from her burning lips like scorching flame, and then came hours of remorse and a pitiful cry reached the throne of grace, "Help, help!" and only after years of struggle did it lay like a writhing reptile beneath her feet, and even then, at times, mocked her with its forked tongue; but conqueror was written on her forehead, and great strength was gained to meet other trials.

She gained rapidly in her studies. No task was placed before her which she could not master. Like a golden thread through the dry practical duties, ran the melody of her songs; faint and uncertain as yet, like untried fingers upon the harp. A wail of anguish burst from all the strings. After the first pain subsided and the star of hope beamed upon the darkness, she read the world's great throbb of heartache by her own, and a master hand evoked from the harp of poesy the rarest, sweetest songs, which seemed an echo of the strains of Paradise.

Among her schoolmates she found one whom she laughingly called her "familiar spirit;" a pale, slight girl, with wavy blonde hair, and deep blue eyes, full of pleasant light. She had not the brilliancy of mind which

characterized Rosamond, yet a depth and earnestness that almost compensated ; and truth and purity were her unfailing attributes. A certain brusqueness of manner often keeps friends at a distance, but some intuitive attraction drew her and Rosamond together, and they soon became fast friends, and remained such for many years.

The village of Lee lay in one of the picturesque valleys of the Susquehanna, amid scenery wild and oftentimes rugged, as if fresh from the uncultured hand of nature. One morning, while mists lay heavy along its banks, to be broken ere long by sunlight like gleams of glory into the fog of our sin and darkness, Rosamond, with her friend Ella, roamed arm in arm along its banks. Both passionately fond of nature, they watched the changing scene with keen delight. Dewdrops glittered and fell from tree and shrub, and myriad tiny rainbows lay shattered at their feet. Voices of birds, as they flitted through the trees, and the low chirp of insects greeted their ears ; but, more beautiful than all, the intense azure of the sky gleaming like sapphire through the foamy mists suffused with golden light.

“ Ella, does it seem possible a world could be more beautiful than this ? ”

“No, Rosamond, and yet—” A dreamy look peculiar to her crept into her eyes and face, while a smile lingered round her lips, as she left the sentence unfinished.

“It does not seem possible, looking upon this beautiful morning, there can be sin and misery, and death around us,” said the persevering voice of Rosamond.

“It is like a dream to me, Rosamond ; life itself seems like a dream,” and the far-away look grew deeper in her eyes.

Oh, vision of loveliness, crowned with light ! May I follow thy witching face, thy beckoning finger, ever pointing to the stars !

CHAPTER IV.

“ You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl’s trust and its woman’s constancy,
How pure, yet passionate,
How calm, yet kind,
How reserved, yet free,
As light where friends are.”

ELLA SANFORD was the oldest of six children, and her mother being an invalid, and her father in close circumstances, much of the training of her young brothers

and sisters devolved upon her. The unnatural burden laid on her young shoulders served to crush the natural buoyancy of her spirits, and to increase the reticence of her nature ; and one had to know well the noble spirit striving to bear up amid its difficulties. Deprived of many pleasures so sweet to the young, and treading a path thickly strewn with thorns, with few roses to brighten the way, one had to know and see and feel it all to love her. This the searching eyes of Rosamond soon discerned, and she sorrowed that her friend was deprived of pleasures which she was learning to love with all the gaiety and enthusiasm of her nature that had lain dormant in her childhood.

Ella was passionately fond of reading, particularly poems or novels, that painted life scenes in true beauty and loveliness. So much so that if Rosamond wanted to have one of their long delightful talks, she would put books of peculiar fascination out of her way, for she well knew there would be no talking, except on one side, until the last leaf was turned.

One day Ella, having an hour of leisure, was deep in the mystery of a delightful novel ; Rosamond ascended the softly carpeted stairs of Ella's pleasant home, crossed the hall and entered the room ; but Ella heeded it not,

and prompted by the spirit of mischief, Rosamond quickly clapped her little hands on either cover of the book. A crash, a quick movement, and it lay under Rosamond's feet, while her merry laugh rang through the room.

The slow, dreamy smile turned into a half look of annoyance on Ella's face.

Rosamond did not mind it ; but when her laughter had subsided, half in apology, she said, "I wanted to talk to you, Ella, and I well knew that book would have to be demolished before I should get a hearing."

"You succeeded well in your stratagem ; now pray go on."

"What do you think, my friend, I am appointed valedictorian."

"I am glad to hear it, Rosamond."

"Are you, though ? But that isn't all."

"Well, what else ?" and having regained her book she began looking for the page so abruptly closed.

"We are going to have a party !" cried the exultant voice of Rosamond.

"A party !" and a look of interest began to dawn in Ella's eyes.

"Yes, a party ! The professor is going to give a party.

The school exercises take place in the afternoon, and in the evening we are going to have a party. Isn't it grand, Ella ? ”

“ You foolish child ; how you do go on.”

“ Well, I've been going on this many a year, and now I've come to a party, or nearly to it.”

“ Any one would suppose you never went to one in your life.”

“ I never did, Ella ; ” and the sad look crept into her face again as she thought of her lonely childhood.

“ You need not look so solemn about it.”

“ You will go with me, Ella, wont you ? ” said the subdued voice of Rosamond.

“ I cannot tell now, Rosamond. If circumstances are favorable perhaps I will. You know mother has been so poorly that I have not been to school very much the last month. It all depends upon how she is at that time. When did you say it comes off ? ”

“ A week from to-night. Oh, but you must go, Ella ; it will spoil half of the pleasure if you do not go. You will go, Ella, please ; ” and a soft pleading was in her voice.

And Ella looking into the sad, earnest face of Rosamond, longing for her first pleasure, said, “ If it is possible, Rosamond, I will go with you.”

“Thank you, Ella, and I must go home now or auntie will scold. But what will you wear?”

Ah, momentous question of woman's existence from the cradle to the grave.

“I shall have to make my check silk do, I suppose.”

“And I suppose auntie will persist in my wearing my white, she is so afraid of me becoming a fashionable young lady;” and the merry laugh rang out again.

“Good-bye,” she called, half down the stairs, and then the sound of her footsteps died away in the distance.

The night of the party came on a beautiful June summer's night. Soft moonlight lay on the earth, and stars looked down through its golden mists, while the magic lights of the firefly shone here, now there, mid the shrubs and flowers. The hum of the cricket and sleepy voices of insects alone broke the stillness of the quiet village, as Rosamond and Ella, arm in arm, wended their way to the party.

As they drew near the home of Professor R—— the large house was a blaze of light, while soft strains of music floated out upon the air, and soon the fair young girls were mingling in its pleasant crowd.

Ella's pale complexion and wavy blonde hair were

finely set off by the changing lights of the checked silk, an heirloom of her mother's.

And Rosamond in white, her rich brown hair wreathed in soft waves about her brow, the wonderful large eyes scintillated with light, a soft pink tinted her cheeks, and a joyous smile wreathed her lips, while her heart throbbed with excitement, as she entered upon the scene of her first party.

CHAPTER V.

“SCULPTORS of life are we as we stand
With our lives uncarved before us,
Waiting the time when at God's command
Our life dream shall pass o'er us.
If we carve heaven's light on the yielding stone
With many a sharp incision,
Then heavenly beauty shall be our own,
Our lives an angel vision.”

ROSAMOND repeated the words over and over, sitting on the steps of her aunt's cottage in the glow of the June sunset. Its mellow light rested upon her upraised face, and gazing into its gold and purple bars, she seemed to see the vision of a young girl with brown hair wreathed above her brow, eyes of lustrous light full of

strange depths, while a smile lingered around her lips, as she stood, with uncertain steps, looking before her into a path slightly descending, yet broad and smooth and lined with banks of beautiful flowers. Further on gay scenes of pleasure and strains of bewildering music greeted her ear, and scenes of beauty kept breaking on her view, but the path ever descending, was lost in strange darkness beyond.

Raising her eyes upward she beheld a path narrow and rugged. Stones would bruise and thorns rend the feet that climbed its ascending way. But gazing upward over the jagged path, far upward, forms in gleaming robes seemed to meet her view, and away on the distant heights a star beamed as if to guide upward, and just above it a hand held out a golden crown, gleaming with jewels.

As the vision faded Rosamond raised her eyes heavenward, and clasping her hands as if in prayer, she murmured, "Ever onward and upward !"

Long she sat there watching the fading light with a look of awe upon her face, when a footstep sounded along the walk and Ella soon sat beside her.

"I am so glad you came, Ella ; I have been dreaming by myself so long I have almost turned into a ghost."

"You look solemn enough for one."

"I have been thinking solemn thoughts, Ella ; I have chosen between the world and its pleasures, and for heaven, to-night. It is strange such thoughts should have come to me, at this time, for you know next week I leave for uncle Fred's, where I shall get a glimpse of the world, for which I have longed since my earliest years."

"You are a strange girl, Rosamond."

"Am I—perhaps—I do not know."

And a silence fell between them. It was peculiarly significant of Rosamond's life, that at any crisis or turning point of her existence, or any great temptation, great wonderful light was given to her to discern the right and wrong, and her trust in the good almost always saved her.

Long the friends sat gazing at the smiling stars. At last Rosamond, as if coming out of a deep reverie, said, "Does it seem possible it is a year to-night since we went to that party at Professor R——'s, to you, Ella ?"

And her dreamy voice answered, "Yes, it seems ages ago."

"Oh, you horrid old thing ; one would suppose from the tone of your voice you had lived since the flood."

"Perhaps I have. How do you know but that I was a butterfly that sailed over the waste of waters and rested upon one of the hill-tops of Lee, and have just come to life in the shape of a human being?"

"Oh, Ella!" and Rosamond's merry laugh rang out joyously, "what are you going to turn into next?"

"There is no telling, Rosamond."

"No, I shouldn't suppose there was, Ella; but as long as you remain my good, true-hearted friend, I don't care. You could not be any thing very bad and be that. Do you know, Ella, that Ada Beaufort is soon to marry Mr. Murray, and going to live in Burlington?"

"No, I did not, Rosamond."

"What a sweet witching girl she is; all fun and frolic, and the greatest flirt, O my!"

"When are they to be married, Rosamond?"

"The first of September, and Carrie Trueman is going away to music school, and three or four of the boys are going away. What will you do with yourself, Ella? so many of us are about leaving. Hadn't you better turn into a grasshopper and hop down to New York? I dread going alone among strangers, but uncle wishes me to come very much. He is father's brother, you know, and I long to have a glimpse of the world; but I will write you all about it, my friend."

And Ella, rising to go, said, "Perhaps my chance may come yet. Good-night, Rosamond."

"I hope so. Good-night, Ella ;" and Rosamond went into the house softly singing :

"Not the angels in heaven above,
Nor demons far under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee."

Oh, the truth and constancy of that girl's heart. Will it become corroded with suspicion and distrust out in the world, where she is so soon going ; or will she pass through the fire of temptation and worldliness without even the smell of fire upon her garments ? Only God can tell !

CHAPTER VI.

"Whether it is better with the many to follow a beaten track,
Or by eccentric wanderings to cull unheeded sweets."

ON—on through the morning mists, now through pleasant valleys, anon scaling the hill tops, now by the side of flowing waters, then through the broken rock, ever on went the iron horse with its freight of human souls, souls going to meet they know not what—joy or woe—going they know not where. They only know they

started for such a port ; whether they will reach that or eternity they know not.

To Rosamond her past life seemed like a receding dream. The few bright scenes she would have kept with her always, but her sad, companionless childhood and her unhappy home she would have gladly forgotten.

Now she was going to meet what ? Only God knew. A feeling half of joy, half of pain, came over her as she gazed on the passing scenes of woodland, fields and flowing waters, passed by beautiful homes of culture and refinement, so peaceful in the morning light that they seemed to the outward eye like gleams of Eden.

Then the scene would change to barren rocks and wretched hovels, where pitiful faces of little children peered out of the broken window-panes, and her heart ached in sympathy.

Thus dreaming, the time sped on, and the sun passed the meridian and slowly descended to the west. When the shadows began to creep out of the valleys and up the hill-sides, Rosamond neared the great metropolis.

Soon its bustle was around her, and bewildered, almost frightened, she gazed upon the hurrying crowds, who jostled her on either side, while the shrill cries of hackmen and newsboys rang in her ears. But she soon dis-

covered an elderly gentleman eagerly scanning the crowd. He saw her wistful look fixed on him, and came quickly to her side.

“Is this my niece, Rosamond Howard?” he asked in a most kindly voice.

“Yes sir! and this is uncle Fred!” she exclaimed, while a relieved look passed over her face and swiftly passed into a glad expression of pleasure.

“I am very glad to meet you, my dear child?” and a pleasant smile lit up his countenance.

He placed her in a carriage waiting, and they sped away through the busy throng. On and on, through interminable streets and around interminable corners, it seemed to Rosamond, until they drew up before a handsome house in one of the pleasantest parts of the city.

Scarcely had the servant opened the door ere a slight girlish form, in misty white garments, came gliding down the broad stairway, and a sweet voice said, “O, Papa! I have waited so impatiently for you; and I am so glad to know and welcome you to our home, cousin Rosamond;” kissing her on lip and cheek. Throwing one arm around her, she drew Rosamond into the drawing room and presented her to a stately lady in black silk as “mamma.” The lady scarcely touching with her dainty

fingers the cotton glove on Rosamond's hand, said, "You are most welcome, Miss Howard."

"Irene, this is cousin Rosamond," and Rosamond turning, saw the dark eyes of the haughty beauty of the Howard mansion fixed upon her in a contemptuous stare, as she slowly viewed the slight figure in its neat gray travelling suit, cut far from the latest fashion, while she said in chilling tones, "Good-evening, Miss Howard," and resumed the reading of her book.

The blood mounted in waves to Rosamond's face, then receded, leaving her pale as death. Looking upon the fashionable young lady clothed in purple silk, and then at her own simple attire, she for the first time became fully conscious of the distinction which purple and fine linen confers upon the wearer.

Maude, with a grieved look on her face, threw an arm around her saying, "I will show you to your room, Rosamond."

As the door closed upon them, Mr. Howard turned to Irene with a frown upon his brow saying, "Irene, I wish you to use Rosamond with becoming politeness while she is a guest in my house."

"Yes, papa," she said in dulcet tones, but with a contemptuous smile upon her lips.

Ah, Irene Howard ! could you read a page of the future that smiles upon you, your haughty lips would have turned to an expression of despair ; for that little sad face and quiet figure in its old-fashioned dress may yet wrench from your selfish heart the sweetest hope that ever blossomed there.

Meanwhile, Maude conducted Rosamond up the broad stairway, through the richly carpeted halls, into a room which seemed like fairy land to Rosamond. It was all rose-color and gold, from the richly frescoed walls down to the soft carpet which gave back no sound to her footsteps. Statuary and beautiful pictures gleamed through the half twilight of the low turned gas, and the perfume of rare flowers lingered upon the air.

Rosamond stopped near the threshold as if entranced, and softly murmured, "How beautiful ! Oh, how beautiful !"

Maude, smiling upon her, said, "I hope you will find everything pleasant and comfortable, Rosamond !"

"Oh, cousin Maude ! this beautiful room cannot be for me !"

"Yes, Rosamond ; and I hope you will spend many happy hours here. Will you go down to dinner ? or if you are too fatigued I will send it up to you."

“Thank you, cousin Maude ; I do not care for any.”

“But you must have some, Rosamond ; and I will send one of the servants up with it ;” and kissing her she glided out of the room.

Rosamond, with bated breath, gazed upon the beautiful pictures and statuary ; at the rich draperies and rare flowers ; then throwing herself into one of the low easy chairs, bursted into tears. The servant came and went, but she paid no heed, but for hours sat there thinking over the events of the day, and of the people among whom she would daily live, perhaps for months to come.

She knew she would love her noble-faced, kind-hearted uncle and Maude, sweet winsome Maude, with her gold-blond hair and merry blue eyes ; but when she thought of her cold stately aunt a shiver passed over her, and she felt that Irene Howard was the serpent, perchance, which lurked in this beautiful Eden.

Con well the lesson before you, Rosamond ; glean what pearls you may from the maelstrom which is surging around you ; store them in the casket of memory as trophies of bright and happy hours.

CHAPTER VII.

“Noiseless falls the foot of time
That only treads on flowers.”

ROSAMOND soon felt happy, and that perfect freedom which we always feel when with those whom we respect and love, while with her uncle or Maude. But the stately politeness of her aunt chilled her. And Irene's kindest kindness was oblivion of her presence ; but fortunately Rosamond seldom met her, as her evenings were mostly spent at some gay party or grand *salon*, and her mornings in recovering from the fatigues of the night.

Maude seemed to take great pleasure in showing Rosamond the rare sights of the city, and every day found them on some delightful drive or walk with Mr. Howard. And each day Rosamond was learning to love her noble, kind-hearted uncle better.

One morning, while viewing the pictures on exhibition in one of the art galleries, Rosamond, attracted by the brilliant coloring of a picture on the opposite side of the room, left her uncle and Maude to get a better view, and as she neared it gave an exclamation of surprise.

“O Maude! can I believe my eyes, or am I dreaming?”

Maude and her father, turning from the picture they were contemplating, with a smile at Rosamond's exclamation, beheld her standing and gazing upon a large picture, on the opposite side of the gallery, her hands clasped and her face raised with an expression of astonishment.

Coming quickly to her side her uncle said, “What astonishes you so, my child?”

“What is it, Rosamond?” asked Maude, in breathless curiosity.

“O, uncle! O, Maude! It is Lee! It is my home!” Then advancing nearer, she pointed out the cottage of her aunt saying, “Yes, it must be, for there is auntie's cottage, and the school house, Ella's home, the great railroad bridge with its many arches, and over yonder is the river.”

Yes, it was a fine painting of the picturesque village of Lee, with its white cottages, few pretentious residences and public buildings, with their background of rugged hills clothed in the gorgeous beauty of the autumn foliage, and the river winding like a silver thread through the bright coloring.

"It must be very pleasant there, Rosamond, if this picture is a good one," said Mr. Howard.

"It is, uncle ; and that road winding away up the hillside leads to the old farm-house where we lived before uncle John died."

"I have always regretted, Rosamond, that I allowed your aunt to take you away so far from the advantages of life ; and I mean to make full compensation for neglected duty now that I have you with me. I think my dead brother would never forgive me if he knew how I had neglected you, and yet—" And he thought of his fashionable wife, with her fine notions, and sighed.

"Dear uncle, did my father resemble you ? I have so often longed to know. Auntie has often talked about mamma, but she would never tell me about my father. She seemed to have a great dislike for him, so much so, she would not allow me to mention his name."

"Yes, my child, he resembled me in size and height, but if you wish to see his face look into the first mirror you come near."

"O, uncle ! do I resemble him so much ?"

"Yes, he had the same high broad brow, rich brown curling hair, and blue-gray eyes, and the same sadness

shadowed in his face. If he had lived, my child, he might have been a great artist. His was a richly endowed nature ; and if I mistake not you have inherited it to a great extent, Rosamond."

"Do you think so, uncle ?" Rosamond asked, with delight beaming on her face.

"Yes, my child ;" and he laid his hand caressingly upon her shoulder and seemed lost in reverie.

"Papa, isn't it near our lunch hour ?" inquired Maude.

"Yes, and we should be returning home."

With the girls on either arm, he wended his way homeward through the busily thronged streets—the passers-by making an ever varying study to Rosamond.

Now came the gay, the young and happy, without a touch of care upon their unruffled brows, surrounded by tender, loving friends.

Then the sad-faced widow, her sombre, rusty garments telling of sorrow and poverty.

Anon a little child, its pitiful old-young face lifted in pleading, the tattered dress and shoeless feet telling their story of want ; and Rosamond would gaze upon her with tear-dimmed eyes.

Again the child of sin in her flaunting garments, de-

spair, like a lurking demon, looking out from the depths of her eyes.

On and on passed the surging crowds, misery and want, happiness and plenty walking side by side, passing and repassing.

Maude, discerning the wistfulness of Rosamond's face, said, "Of what are you thinking, Rosamond?"

"I was thinking what a strange world this is."

"But clear up your care-laden brow, Rosamond, and be glad your life has fallen in pleasant places. The Master is able to care for all."

"I know, but I feel so sorry for them," Rosamond said, with a sigh, as they ascended the steps of Mr. Howard's mansion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Dearly bought the hidden treasure,
Finer feeling can bestow,
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.—BURNS.

MR. HOWARD often brought in tickets for an opera or theatre, for he wished Rosamond to see all that might interest or please her, and he loved to watch the smiles chase away the shadows on her face ; loved to see her eyes dilate, glow with excitement as only those eyes will to whom pleasures are rare.

Rosamond seemed walking in a bewildering dream the moment she entered a theatre. The blaze of the lights, the gay attire of handsome ladies, strains of delicious music and scenes of beauty changing place, all thrilled her with ecstasy.

One night, while sitting midst it all, the scene, as if by magic, changed to the old rambling farm-house, and lo ! in the distance she was starting for school in her gingham sun-bonnet and calico dress, wending her way through the deep woods, the fragrance of its ferns around her, the voices of birds in the air, and the brook telling its story again.

A start ! a quick gasp ! and it was gone—and she was in the sculptured halls of pleasure, dressed in the handsome attire her uncle provided her, his kind eyes smiling at her, and Maude's caressing hand laid on hers.

Was it a dream—that far away time ? or was this the dream—and what would the awakening be ?

While the bewildered expression was still on her face, Maude said, "There is Irene in that private box with Mrs. Golden and Mr. Earle."

And Rosamond gazed upon the dark, haughty beauty, her loveliness enhanced by her rich violet silk and rare jewels, receiving like a queen the homage of the young dark-haired man bending over her.

"Is not Mr. Earle fine looking, Rosamond ? Papa says he is destined to be one of the first men of his time."

Rosamond heard but made no reply, for she was watching the soft light on Irene's face and the look of admiration on his.

Just then they discerned Rosamond, Maude and her father, and Mr. Earle said to Irene, "Is not that a strange lady with your sister ?"

The soft lights died out of Irene's face as she said,

with a contemptuous smile, "Yes, it is some country cousin papa has picked up."

"There is wonderful intelligence in her face—and what fine looking eyes."

"One might suppose you had fallen in love with her at first sight." And a low scornful laugh greeted his ear.

A quick flush spread over his face ; he made no answer, but watched with deeper interest the changing expressions of Rosamond's countenance.

A slight frown disfigured Irene's brow as he saw her to her carriage and asked permission to call within a few days ; for of all her many admirers Mr. Earle was the only one who ever brought a flush to her cheek, or the soft light into her eyes.

Though poor, he was slowly and surely rising in his profession at the bar.

Irene felt that to be his queen was the sweetest morsel life could give her ; and it fired her heart with jealousy that he should for a moment turn his attention from her to her common-place cousin.

One evening, soon after, just as the setting sun was tinting earth, sea and sky with its own rare colors, Rosamond stood near one of the western windows of the

drawing room, gazing upon that beautiful sad picture of Beatrice Cenci. The glow of the sunset seemed to touch into rare beauty the sad *spirituelle* face, the lips seemed to glow with life again, and tell their story over. Long Rosamond gazed upon it, till the tints, so lifelike, faded, and the ashen hue crept back again.

Then, taking her pencil, she wrote the following lines :

BEATRICE CENCI.

I gazed into the tender face,
Into the dark, sad eyes,
With eternity in their depths,
And dreams of Paradise.
It seemed to glow with life again,
The pale lips tell their woes,
How heart o'erflows with untold pain,
And aches from unseen blows.

I listen to the sad refrain,
In sunset's lingering glow,
Gazing into the great sad eyes,
Where the shadows come and go ;
A soul goes out from parted lips,
Away toward the sunset shore ;
The last ray fades in darkening sky,
The sorrowful tale is o'er.

And I think of lives that echo,
The Cenci's plaintive moan,
Would point them o'er the sunset sea,
Where she long since hath flown.

The saddened soul has found its youth
Aglow with life again,
The dark eyes shadow mystic depths,
But never a woe or pain.

Scarcely were they finished, when Irene and Maude entered the room.

Almost immediately after, Mr. Earle was announced. He was most cordially greeted by them. Turning to Rosamond, Maude said, "Cousin Rosamond, allow me to introduce Mr. Earle. Mr. Earle, Miss Howard."

"I am very happy to make your acquaintance, Miss Howard;" and her clear gray eyes were raised to the dark ones looking so pleasantly at her.

Irene might well bite her lip in vexation that evening, for Rosamond was looking unusually well in dark blue silk, a gift from her uncle, with misty laces at throat and wrist, her rich brown hair wreathed in soft waves above her high broad brow, her cheeks tinged with pink, and the glow of her eyes intense.

Soon after Irene and Maude were engaged with other callers, and Mr. Earle availed himself of the opportunity to engage Rosamond in conversation.

On every topic they touched, her clear decided views brought a deeper interest into his face, and for the first time in several months, while in the presence of Irene,

she was wholly forgotten ; and the unconcious, commonplace cousin was winning what Irene would have given her selfish life to have won. The remembrance of that evening, and the radiance of those blue-gray eyes raised so fearlessly to his will linger with him many a year.

Irene's pretty witcheries paled beside that delightful memory, and the hope of again meeting Rosamond's sad face aglow with thought and noble purpose.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Each breath is burdened with a bidding,
And every minute hath its mission.”

O DUTY! how oft thy stern face peers in upon our delightful dreams, and thy accusing finger points out a path rough and jagged with stones that will pierce our feet. Our pleading look brings not a gleam of pity on thy stern countenance, but that accusing finger seems saying, “ On, on ! ” And we, conscience stricken, obey its mandate.

But every time we obey and conquer the obstacles before us, and find ourselves on the firm, even path again,

away on the distant heights the star gleams nearer, and the faint outline of a tender face beaming down grows more distinct.

Falter not, O ye feet, climbing the narrow, jagged path. Press onward, upward !

The next morning a telegram reached Rosamond that her aunt was dangerously sick, and ere noon she was far on her journey homeward. It was with great reluctance she parted from her uncle and Maude, for she had learned to love them tenderly.

The few months she had spent with them were the happiest of her life. The remembrance lingered round her like a bright dream, and ever out of the dream peered those dark eyes, looking with such deep interest into hers.

How slight sometimes is the over-balance in the scale of fate !

Had she remained a few weeks longer an inmate of her uncle's home what happiness might have been hers ! Unconscious of results, she left the brightness of noon to grope amid the shades of twilight. Perhaps it was better so ; her intense nature drank such deep draughts of joy or woe that in the joy she might have forgotten the things which she should remember. In her sorrow

she felt that He had removed happiness from her only until she should be strong enough to bear it.

Rosamond felt more and more, as she neared the village of Lee, that she was going to meet sorrow and trouble. Yet happy lights came and went on her face, which had grown fairer and rounder during the months she had been absent, and her manner had gained a certain air of refinement which comes of contact with people of culture ; and withal, this peep into the world, brief though it was, had been great gain to her.

It was at the close of a cold, rainy day in November that she arrived at Lee. No warm welcome awaited her, no kindly voice greeted her as she stepped upon the platform. As she walked through the dark streets of the village they seemed lonely and lifeless. After the recent weeks of loving care and protection she felt desolate and friendless, and tears sprang unbidden to her eyes, but dashing them away in scorn at the selfishness, she hurried on to her aunt's cottage.

She found her very low and unconscious with fever, and quickly changed her travelling suit for a bright, warm wrapper, and hastened to her bedside.

Ah ! well for us all we cannot read the future. If Rosamond could have lifted the veil and looked adown

the hours, the days, the months which, rank on rank, were marching in, she would have been frightened. Each hour and day brought in its burden and laid it at her feet, and she gathered it up and carried it on to meet the to-morrow, whose ever receding footsteps seem but the echo of to-day's. Not always cheerfully and patiently did she do and endure—human nature is too weak for that—but she tried to be patient. •

After the fever passed, Mrs. Dean lingered many months a helpless invalid. Winter passed away in a monotonous round of duty to Rosamond, broken at Christmas by a present from her uncle Fred, of a choice selection of books and a bright cheerful letter from Maude. Then silence seemed to have swallowed them up, and they, and the happy months she spent with them, seemed more like a dream than the memory of a delightful reality.

The spring and summer came and went ; and one beautiful evening in September, Rosamond, having a few moments of leisure, sat in her favorite seat on the steps of the cottage.

How sad was the pale face lifted to the starlight, while the solemn eyes looked up, with unutterable longing in their depths, to where the crescent moon and

evening star hung like jewels in the midst of the great calm which was on the earth. As she sat there repeating the beautiful words of Jean Paul Richter, saying them over and over, half aloud, as they gave unconscious shape to some undefined thought, "the moon and evening star gleamed solitary, like a past, in heaven," Ella's light footstep broke upon her reverie, and all her hungry longing for human companionship bursted out in the words with which she greeted her.

"O, Ella! my friend! I am so glad, so very glad you came," closely clasping her hand as if afraid of her fleeing away. "I am growing morbid, spending so many hours day after day alone, as I might say, for auntie is not able to talk much, and she is slowly fading away from life. When I think that this past year, weary though it has been at times, must end with death, it seems as if my heart would break. Although auntie has not been as kind as she might have been, yet I know I shall miss her when she is gone, and then I shall drift, only God knows where."

Throwing a caressing arm around her, Ella said, "Have you not heard from your cousin Maude yet?"

"Yes, I had a letter a few days ago, and she has been so deep in sorrow and through so many changes, she has

not had thought or time to write to me before. She writes that uncle Fred died in the spring, leaving them almost penniless through the treachery of a supposed friend. O, my noble, kind-hearted uncle ! how I loved him. She also writes that Irene married an old man for his money this summer, and is queening it royally in Europe with her old money bags, while she is teaching music to support herself and mother, and can barely earn enough to keep them together. So all hope of going to them is over. But a niche in God's great plan is waiting for me somewhere, Ella, and He will guide my footsteps thither when my work is finished here."

Ella gazed tenderly at the sad face, down which the tears were streaming, while she said, "Do not be so discouraged, Rosamond."

"I am not, Ella ; I am willing to leave it all with Him. I must go in now, as auntie may need me. Will you come in? "

"Not to-night, Rosamond. Good night."

Rosamond listened to her receding footsteps until they died away in the distance, then with a deep sigh entered the house.

About two months later she closed her aunt's eyes in death. With a heavy heart she shut up the cottage,

and, taking the few hundred dollars her aunt left her, she accepted the invitation of her former schoolmate, Mrs. Murray, to spend a few months with her, hoping ere her present funds were exhausted to obtain a situation as teacher in Burlington or elsewhere.

CHAPTER X.

In our course through life, we shall meet the people who are coming to meet *us* from many strange places, and by many strange roads, and what it is set to them to do to us, and what it is set to us to do to them, *will all be done*.—DICKENS.

“You will come down this evening, Rosamond?” And the pansy eyes of Mrs. Murray were raised to Rosamond’s face, while she laid a caressing hand upon her arm.

“I fear I shall not add much to the pleasure of the evening, if I do, Ada. Still, if you wish it I will make an effort. It seems almost impossible for me to regain my cheerful spirits since auntie died.”

“It is two months now, is it not, Rosamond? I fear you are worrying because you do not get a situation, but you need not. You know we love to have you here, and

we would be glad if we might do something to cheer you. I shall expect you down this evening, for I wish to introduce a particular friend of my husband. No objections, Rosamond ; I can't stay to listen to any," and with a happy smile on her face she left the room.

Rosamond sat down by the window which overlooked the fine lawn of Mrs. Murray's pleasant home, and watched the tinted clouds in the sunset sky until they faded. Lines of care had gathered on Rosamond's face in the past year, and it had grown thinner and paler, and around the mouth patient lines had gathered, giving a look of sweetness to the whole face.

No happy lights came and went on her countenance now, as she sat there trying to solve the problem of life. Hope's witching face was veiled, and with uncertain hands Rosamond was groping in the darkness of the future.

It galled her independent spirit to be so long dependent upon strangers, not that her present home was an unhappy one. She had tried, although unsuccessfully as yet, to procure a situation as teacher. She dreaded going down into the lower ranks of labor ; yet she knew that when the struggle should come she would go.

The gathering darkness warned her that if she was

going down to the parlors to mingle with Mrs. Murray's guests, she must begin her toilet.

O how long it seemed since she had gathered with the gay and happy; not since that last evening in her uncle's home. As she thought of the changes since then the tears dimmed her eyes, and it was with a heavy heart she arranged her hair in waves and braids around her head, donned her black cashmere dress, with its snowy ruffles, and descended to the parlors.

Mrs. Murray, all loveliness and grace in her dove-colored silk, introduced her to her many friends, among which she met a former schoolmate, Carrie Trueman, and leaving them in pleasant converse, Mrs. Murray went to perform other duties. After a while Carrie was called to the piano, and soon her rich voice filled the room. Rosamond listened with delight to the plaintive melody of a song which Maude had often sung. She was deep in a reverie of that far-away time which the song suggested, when Mrs. Murray's voice sounded close to her side saying, "Rosamond, allow me to introduce Mr. Maybee. Mr. Maybee, Miss Howard."

And Rosamond, raising her eyes, encountered a mischievous expression on Mrs. Murray's face, and a pair of laughing blue eyes bent upon her, while the posses-

sor, a gentleman of pleasing appearance, stood before her.

Why so thoughtlessly bring human souls together ; or is there a destiny, silently, link by link, connecting our lives with the unknown, over which human effort has no control ? Be it as it may, it is hid from us, even as it was hid from Rosamond, that this man, who stood in smiling grace before her, was to make yet more devious the paths wherein she walked.

He seated himself by her side, and they were soon engaged in conversation. As Rosamond became interested, the anxious care-worn expression faded, and the olden glow crept into her eyes, and soft tints into her cheeks.

Mrs. Murray delighted with her stratagem, pointed them out to her husband with a low laugh.

Mr. Murray, laying a caressing hand on her soft blonde hair, while looking fondly at her, said, " Ah ! my pansy-eyed darling ! how do you know but you have started a game of mischief which will end in sorrow to one or both of those persons yonder ? "

" Not if they marry and are as happy as we are, dear Will."

" Very true ; but Jack Maybee has been paying attention to Lucy Winters, of Great Barrington, for some

time past, although I am not aware that they are engaged. Perhaps it would be as well not to meddle."

"By no means, my dear sir," she replied, with a gay laugh. "If one may judge from their first acquaintance meddling would be of small avail, and I know Rosamond too well to lisp a word to her. I am only too glad to see her face brighten again, and as this may be a false rumor, it would be cruel to mar her pleasure with it."

"All is fair in love and war," her husband laughingly said; and then he turned to a group who came up to make their adieus.

Meanwhile, Jack Maybee, with the consciousness of having spent an unusually pleasant evening, bade Rosamond "good night" with reluctance, and accepted the gracious invitation of Mrs. Murray to call frequently.

Rosamond was surprised to find herself occasionally, for several days afterward, dreaming of a pair of blue eyes full of sunshine.

One beautiful moonlight evening, soon after, a carriage and span of handsome bays drove up to the door, and the possessor of said blue eyes requested the pleasure of her company for a drive. Rosamond accepted.

It soon became currently acknowledged that Jack

Maybee should be Rosamond's escort on all occasions ; and a look of happiness crept into her eyes, while her face became fairer and rounder, and her laugh rung out joyously again.

The subtle workings of the human heart are past finding out.

It was all as much of a surprise to Rosamond as to others. She would not acknowledge to herself that his going or coming had any deeper interest for her than ordinary friendship.

How barren her life had been of youthful pleasures, with which so many young lives are satiated. Was it any wonder that the attentions of this young gentleman should have been very gratifying to her.

He possessed many pleasing qualities, and gave promise of attaining position and wealth in his vocation.

It was very evident that he was deeply in love with Rosamond. Still no word of love ever passed his lips. Rosamond often encountered his eyes resting upon her, as if in sorrowful regret, when he would abruptly leave the room, and often they would not meet again for a week. Then, with all his former devotion, he would return to her side.

Thus several months went by, and then his business

called him to a distant part of the State. Externally it was but an ordinary leave taking when they parted ; but to those two lives that last hand-clasp was like wrenching heartstrings asunder. For some moments afterward Rosamond felt stunned, bewildered ; then, thinking of the curious eyes upon her, she recovered her failing spirits, and with eyes heavy with unshed tears, with a wonder and pain at her heart, she rejoined Mr. and Mrs. Murray.

CHAPTER XI.

And therefore my heart is heavy
With a sense of unquiet pain,
For but Heaven can tell if the parted
Shall meet on the earth again.

With Him be the time and the season
Of our meeting again with thee !
Whether here, on these earthly borders,
Or the shore of the world to be.—CARY.

ROSAMOND continued her search for employment. Having given up all hope of obtaining a situation as teacher, she next made an effort to obtain a clerkship, for she knew she must have work, active, absorbing work, to regain her tranquillity of mind. But in this, too, she was unsuccessful.

One evening Mrs. Murray had several young friends to tea, and among them a stranger from Great Barrington.

During their merry chat at the tea-table, this lady turned to Mrs. Murray with the inquiry, "I believe you are acquainted with Jack Maybee, Mrs. Murray?"

"Yes, he is a friend of my husband."

"Do you know he is to be married this fall to a young lady of Great Barrington?"

"No, I had not heard so," replied Mrs. Murray, and quickly glanced at Rosamond, with some apprehension.

There was a look of painful surprise on Rosamond's face, and the china cup which she had half raised to her lips at the moment, fell with a crash from her nerveless fingers. But hastily regaining her self-possession, and with a word of apology, she arose and left the room.

"Oh, Mrs. Murray, what blunder have I committed?"

"None that I know of," she replied, assuming an indifferent tone in order to shield Rosamond. "My friend has been very nervous since the death of her relatives," and Mrs. Murray turned the conversation upon other subjects.

About two weeks later Rosamond was prostrated

with fever ; but through the kind, sisterly care of Mrs. Murray, and the skill of the physician, she soon rallied, and in a few weeks was able to be around again, but it was a long time ere she recovered her former health.

She accepted a clerkship offered her about this time, but remained an inmate of Mrs. Murray's home.

Several months this routine of duty continued and she was fast regaining her peace of mind, if not happiness, when one evening Jack Maybee was announced.

Rosamond received him with her former kindness, yet with a certain reserve in her manner, which he did not seem to heed, but took up the acquaintance where he left it several months before.

Rosamond would have gladly sought an explanation, but as no word of love had ever passed his lips she could not.

At Christmas Rosamond received a handsome present from Jack Maybee, and an occasional letter found its way to her.

She accepted them all, as she did not wish to offend him ; and as no marriage had taken place as predicted, she began to hope there was no truth in the rumor.

Another year went by, and Rosamond found peace and hope in reading nature's ever open page ; otherwise

her life would have been monotonous indeed, for her health would not permit her to mingle often in amusements or social pleasures after her daily duties at the store.

Jack Maybee always called when he came in town. From their increasing friendship gossip predicted marriage, while the happy lights began to creep back into Rosamond's face.

One evening, late in the autumn, he was announced, and Rosamond looking unusually well in dark blue silk, greeted him with somewhat of the olden warmth in her manner.

She noticed his face was thinner and more care worn than she had ever seen it, and an occasional cough interrupted their conversation. He told her he thought of going South during the coming winter that he might recover from it. Finally he arose and bade her "good night" and "good-bye." And so they parted.

Mrs. Murray noticed the radiance that lingered on Rosamond's face for days after, and sincerely hoped that her first and only stratagem of the kind might yet end well.

One mornig, when the winter's snows lay pile on pile upon the earth, wrapping it close in their cold

shroud, while the icy breath of the northern winds touched all with the delicate frost-work of their frozen clime, the pale beams of the winter sun stole in through the shutters of Rosamond's room, and aroused her from sleep, and she awoke with a vague consciousness of unutterable sorrow resting upon her spirits, and the remembrance of a vision of a long untravelled road before her, and away in the distance the domes and pinnacles of a New Jerusalem glistening in the morning sun.

Often during the day her thoughts returned in wonder to that strange feeling of the morning.

That evening Mrs. Murray noticed that the book Rosamond held fell more than once from her hands, as if unheeded ; and an unwonted, wistful look had stole into her face. Mr. Murray came in and playfully threw a paper, which he had received at the post office, into Rosamond's lap, which she received with a smile, and, after a few moments, leisurely opened.

Like a meteor flashing upon our wondering eyes, filling us with terror and affright, while gazing upon the trackless plains of the starry realms, does misfortune or sorrow often come upon us.

Rosamond carelessly, listlessly looking over the paper, with a half smile on her face, because it came from the

town where Jack Maybee had located his business, ran her eye over the marriage items and deaths, and cried, "Oh! Ada! Ada! Jack Maybee is dead!"

With an expression sadder than tears in her eyes, a stunned, deathless feeling about her heart, Rosamond arose with tottering feet, went to her room, and securely locking the door, struggled with the flood-tides of sorrow that surged around her.

Yet even in this deep darkness the exultant cry went out from her heart, "Mine now, all mine."

Yes, whatever ties had bound him while on earth, which he had never broken in word, if he had in deed, he was hers now, hers through the eternal years of God.

CHAPTER XII.

"Ah, yes! when we drink from the river of life,
Where the songs of the angels swell,
When we meet with the loved and lost of earth,
We shall murmur no more, Farewell!"

Two weeks before Rosamond read of Jack Maybee's death, a steamer was coursing its way along the Atlantic coast, leaving the snow-clad hills of the North and its ice-bound rivers and chilly breezes far in its wake.

As its glistening prow cleaved the waters, day by day it neared its destined port in the balmy South.

To the invalid on board it seemed as if a new world was breaking upon his view, and a new life quickening the sluggish life-streams that had run so low.

With a pleasure too deep for words, the brother bending tenderly over him, watched the glow of health creep into his cheek, watched the blue eyes brighten with their olden sunshine, heard his merry laugh ring out again as he related some of their boyhood's exploits. Then that harsh cough would sweep over him like a tempest in its wrath, leaving him pale and exhausted for hours after.

Evening after evening, those two men, wrapped in their heavy cloaks, one so tenderly devoted to the other, sat or reclined on the heaving deck ; one gazing away into the misty starlight, wondering if it would be long ere his soul would be climbing their mystic heights.

Then the scene would change to a pleasantly appointed room in the city of Burlington, and the radiance of deep blue-gray eyes looking out of a sad face seemed raised in their clear, fearless look to his. A smile lingered round his lips ; while the vision of a pleasant home, not located as yet, came before his mind's eye, and she, the guiding-star of his life, filled it with her pres-

ence. Then a great longing would come over him to live and carve his way to fortune, as had been his aim for many a year. Perchance, the vision of a sorrowful-faced maiden, treading her life-path alone, came before him, too, at times ; if so he quickly dismissed it.

The other seemed to have no thought or purpose in life but to watch the pale, emaciated face before him. His strong arm was ever ready to support the tottering feet ; his hands to gather the folds of the cloak more closely ; and his form broke the force of the breeze that it might not blow too roughly upon him. His the warning voice that beguiled him from the evening air ; his the hand, tender as a mother's, that adjusted his pillow, and left him not until the pale eyelids were closed in slumber.

When the first rays of the morning sun broke over the blue waste of waters he arose, and with alacrity performed the same duties, day after day, with untiring patience, until the flowery banks of Florida's sunny shore broke upon their vision.

The invalid began to fail again as soon as he left the steamer.

A chill of dread began to creep around the heart of that devoted brother, as the pale face he had watched so

tenderly became paler, the sunken eyes more sunken, and the exhausting cough more violent.

One morning, after they had been a few days on shore, the invalid reclining upon a couch with his head raised so that he could look out on the glowing landscape, touched his brother who sat by his side with his thin nerveless hand and said, "It is almost over with me, Arthur."

An icy hand seemed to clutch the brother's heart as he heard the words, but he rallied his spirits and said cheerfully, "Don't be discouraged, Jack, we shall live to be gray-haired men together yet."

The invalid shook his head saying, "No, do not deceive yourself, Arthur. I am sorry to pain you, but when the night comes again I shall be dead."

Arthur veiled his face with his hands to hide the deep emotion written upon his countenance; and the invalid continued, "I have two requests to make of you, Arthur, and I know you will grant them; one is, to send word of my death to Will Murray," and a spasm of agony passed over his face as he thought of Rosamond; then he resumed. "The other is, to bury this poor worn out frame in the village church-yard beside father and mother. Is it asking too much, Arthur?"

"No, no ! O, Jack ! Jack ! how can I have it so !" cried Arthur, for a moment losing control of his feelings.

"Hush, Arthur ! I am so sorry to leave you, sorry to leave life with so little accomplished. But God wills it so, and perhaps it is all for the best. I try to think so, Arthur," and his voice died away in a whisper, and overcome by the exhaustion of talking, in a little while he he fell asleep.

Hour after hour the brother watched that face more closely, observing every change.

At noon the invalid seemed to rally somewhat, but when the sun began to decline, he knew the words Jack had spoken in the morning were true. When the setting sun reached the horizon and had almost disappeared behind the distant treetops, his dying rays lingering as if in good-night caresses upon sea, sky and woodland, the watchful brother observed the invalid's eyelids flutter, open, but the sunshine was fading from the eyes, even as it was fading in the western sky.

A low whisper came to his ear.

"Good—bye—Arthur—God—bless—you ;" and the brother was alone with only the moan of the sea breaking upon his sorrow.

A few days later a funeral cortege wended its way

through the northern winter's snow, and the earthly tenement of Jack Maybee was laid beneath it. But the influence of his life will linger around some souls forever.

Think ye, O careless ones ! you can live for naught ? Nay, I tell you, the influence of your lives will circle across some hearts for good or ill, to the remotest shores of eternity ; even as a pebble thrown into a lake will circle to the distant shores.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ And I smiled to think of God's greatness
Flowed round our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest.”—MRS. BROWNING.

ROSAMOND performed her accustomed duties day after day, and but few knew or guessed the anguish of her heart. Disease had long been watching her like a bird of prey, and took advantage of her drooping spirits to pounce upon her. The business firm with which she was engaged as clerk were failing, and steady employment was taken from her, so she had not even that to divert her mind from her sorrow.

Mrs. Murray most sorrowfully, and with a pang of regret, noticed the pale face grow paler and sadder, and the solemn eyes grow larger. Perhaps if Rosamond had been in her former health she would not have given away so to her sorrow, but as it was it seemed to wrap her like a dark mantle in its sombre folds.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray tried to rouse her to the simple interests of life again, but her joyous laugh or gay repartee never answered their pleasant sallies now. Only after one of her long, lonely walks, which had always been one of the delights of her life, did her face seem to brighten.

Several months went by. Still Rosamond's slight form was seen on her lonely walks, and her place was seldom vacant at the table.

During the July heats, Mrs. Murray was stricken down with typhoid fever, and after six weeks of weary suffering she began to mend. Not gaining strength as fast as she should, the physician thought best for her to try the sea shore, and prevailing on Rosamond to accompany her as friend and companion, they departed.

One dream, one intense longing of Rosamond's life was realized when she stood on the shore of the sea, its silvery tide washing up at her feet. Her eyes glowed with joy as she stood gazing enraptured upon its blue-

green waves stretching away as far as her eye could reach, dotted here and there with gleaming sails.

She never tired of the changing scene, or invigorating sea breeze, and every morning the passers-by saw on the beach the pale, sad-faced girl standing beside the low easy chair of her invalid companion, gazing with delight upon the water.

To Rosamond it was slowly but surely bringing renewed strength and health. The thin face began to look rounder; the rose tints of the shells she loved so well to gather, began to tinge her cheeks and lips.

But it seemed to bring no change to Mrs. Murray, yet she loved to watch its dashing waves; and its cooling breath upon her brow seemed like the caress of unseen hands. Rosamond often looked at her with wistful eyes, and wondered why one so full of life and gaiety, surrounded by loving care and tenderness, should be a helpless invalid slowly drifting away from earth, while she, with returning health and vigor, must walk on.

Rosamond noticed for several days after, a drooping look on the face of Mrs. Murray; and one morning while on the shore with her as usual, and gathering shells a few steps distant, she beckoned Rosamond to her side. Taking her face between her hands in her own caressing

fashion, she said, "How glad, how very glad I am, Rosamond, to see your face brightening with health and hope again." Rosamond smiled, but made no reply; and Mrs. Murray resumed.

"I thought once I never should forgive myself for being the means of bringing such sorrow upon you, and it is my last stratagem of that kind."

"Perhaps it was for the best, Ada, after all."

"Do you think so, dear? I wish I could see it so."

"It has, at least, been the means of my finding my life work."

"How so, Rosamond?"

"I have determined to cultivate my one talent."

"Oh, Rosamond, I am so glad to hear it; and write a book, do, dear. I know you are fully capable, and fill it with thoughts that will be like balm to the weary hearts of the world."

Rosamond, wondering what Mrs. Murray could know of weary hearts, said, "I mean to try, Ada."

"Do, Rosamond, and perhaps earn a living, for after I am gone you will be homeless again, dear," and the pansy eyes filled with tears.

This was the first time Rosamond had heard Mrs.

Murray talk of dying, and with a pang of sorrow she said, "Why Ada, you will get well !"

"No, Rosamond, and I have called you to me to tell you if you were ready, I should like to go home to-morrow."

"By all means, my friend, I will make arrangements as soon as we return to the house."

That evening Rosamond went out to her favorite seat on the rocks, and bade farewell to the sea, for they were to leave on the early morning train.

CHAPTER XIV.

"We hope, we aspire, we resolve, we trust,
When the morning calls us to life and light ;
But our hearts grow weary, and ere the night,
Our lives are trailing the sordid dust."

"You will stay with me, Rosamond, until all is over ; it will not be long, dear."

Rosamond looked into the pleading face, into the pany eyes, solemn with holy light, at the slight form, and thin, transparent hand laid so carressingly on hers, and could not say no.

So she watched over her friend with untiring care. One morning in the frost-bound month of January, the death angel came, and the soul that had known so little of the sorrows or troubles of earth, supported by angel hands, went out to meet the dawn, with the same bright, glad look on her face, and the same joyful smile on her lips with which she had received the blessings of earth.

Soon after, the desolate husband closed the pleasant home, so full of bright and sad memories, and became a wanderer in foreign lands.

Rosamond, so fond of home ties, of human companionship, and of social life, took up her life work alone, hoping to find contentment and peace, if not happiness, in its performance.

In her simple, plainly furnished room, where the smiling stars looked in all through the solemn night, where her eyes could rove at will over the tops of houses, and rest on the distant mountain-tops clad in winter's snow or summer's verdure, where the din of the noisy world, with its joy and woe, came softened to her ears, Rosamond earned a scanty subsistence with her needle. All of her leisure she spent in study, or with her pen. Her only recreation was a solitary walk at early morning, or in the twilight.

Thus time passed on, and Rosamond saw the snows of winter pass away, and the distant mountain-tops crowned with the golden green of spring, and change to the deeper foliage of summer, then aflame with the gorgeous hues of autumn. But her untiring pen rested not, her courage seldom faltered, and when the New Year's bells rang out their chimes, her first book had been given to the world, full of balm for the weary ones of earth, even as her friend had wished.

Rosamond never forgot that New Year's day, for it seemed as if a new era in her life dawned with it.

All that day the gladness never died out of her face, and with renewed courage and deeper inspiration she took up her pen again.

CHAPTER XV.

“So we'll not dream, nor look back, dear,
But march right on, content and bold,
To where our life sets heavenly clear,
Westward, behind the hills of gold,”

SEVERAL years went by, and Rosamond had given other books to the world, which were received gladly.

And into her life and face had crept peace and gladness.

With regret she left the room where her first work had been given to the world, where she had struggled and labored so many years, and removed to a handsome cottage in one of the pleasantest locations of the city.

With keen pleasure Rosamond roamed from room to room, after she had completed its furnishing.

True, no costly upholstery, no gems of art or rare statuary, no frescoed walls or rich carpets greeted her eye, but the pleasant, comfortably furnished rooms were arranged with the exquisite taste and delicate touch of artistic fancy. Her favorite room was the cosy library, with its handsome book-case and fine selection of books. Here she gathered her mementoes of other days, and her choicest pictures, and placed her writing-desk so she could look out at will through the low French windows, into her beautiful flower garden, where the air was laden with delicate perfumes. And after all was completed to her satisfaction, she penned Ella Sanford, a note saying :

DEAR FRIEND :

The home I had in anticipation when I wrote you last is completed, and the first guest I wish to welcome within its walls

is the friend of my early youth. You will not refuse to come—it would cruelly disappoint me. So write me, dear friend, at the earliest opportunity when I may expect you.

ROSAMOND.

The happy lights came and went on Rosamond's face as of yore. Although the bloom of youth had faded, never to return, still a rarer charm lingered upon the sweet countenance, and the blue-gray eyes were filled with a deeper light. Ella Sanford accepted Rosamond's urgent invitation, and found her surrounded by her flowers, her birds, her books and pleasant occupations.

Ella, wearied with home cares of many years, yet with the same dreamy smile on lip and brow, the same far-away look in her eyes, found rest in Rosamond's pleasant home.

One evening, when the June twilight was creeping over the earth in warning of the coming night, Rosamond, seated at the western window of the cosy library, watching the fading light, was deep in a reverie of other days. The tender notes of an old song played by the softened touch of Ella's dreamy fancy stole in from the adjacent room. It filled her heart with sad yearnings. At last, the low dreamy notes died away, and Ella laid a caressing hand on Rosamond's brow, saying, "Why these tears, Rosamond?"

“Was I crying, Ella? I did not know. Never mind me, my friend, I have many moods, as you have perceived ere this, no doubt. Does it seem twelve years to you, Ella, since we were young girls in all the pride of long dresses and beaux? and how well I remember my first party.”

“No, I cannot realize that it is so long, Rosamond;” and Ella seated herself in a low chair by Rosamond’s side.

“Yet it is, Ella; and while you were playing I lived it all over briefly, and there isn’t a week I should care to live over again.”

“Yet, Rosamond, you have done what few women can do by unaided effort; built a home and happiness for yourself. With the rewards of labor around you, you ought to be very happy, Rosamond.”

“So I am, Ella. I should be one of the most ungrateful of human beings if I were not. But you know the human heart is never satisfied. If I could keep you with me as friend and companion, I almost believe I should be.”

“But that cannot be, Rosamond. I have enjoyed my visit here, but still I shall be glad to return home and take up the rôle of duty again.”

“Do you intend to wear out your life there, Ella?”

“Perhaps; I do not know what the years may bring;” and her eyes wandered out on the darkening landscape, and a happy light was in their depths as if a beautiful vision of the future were looming up mid the darkness.

“Do you ever hear from your cousin, Maude Howard?” Ella asked one day.

“No, I have not since she wrote me the fall auntie died. I answered her letter, but never received a reply. I have often thought of her, and her rare beauty. She had golden wavy hair, blue eyes, and perfect features, like some rare painting of the old masters, and was also tender hearted and good. I am very sorry I have lost trace of her. Irene was beautiful, too, but a great contrast to Maude, with her olive complexion, dusky hair, dark eyes and haughty pride!”

“Why don’t you write to New York? You might possibly discover their whereabouts.”

“I think I will. Did I ever tell you, Ella, that my father was an artist?”

“No, I do not remember that you did.”

“Uncle Fred told me, when I was visiting there. How I should have liked to have seen his pictures, but uncle Fred did not seem to know what became of them.”

Ella Sanford remained about a month with Rosamond, then bade her good-bye, and returned to her home.

Rosamond was very lonely after her departure, but other friends soon gathered around her, and she became reconciled.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever,
Do noble things, not dream them all day long,
So making life, death, and that vast forever,
One grand, sweet song!”

AMONG the youthful friends who gathered around Rosamond, there was one she always welcomed with keen pleasure ; Carrie Stephens, a girl of some twenty summers, and of rare sweetness of disposition. You had only to look into the smiling dark blue eyes, at the broad, unruffled brow from which the dark brown hair rippled in natural waves ; at the sweet mouth, the ruby lips, ever ready with smile and pleasant greeting for rich and poor, for the fortunate and unfortunate, to love her. Surrounded by wealth, adoring friends and indulgent parents, she still was an unspoilt, winsome child of nature.

Can you blame Rosamond for loving her? Often her pony phaeton stopped at Rosamond's door, and with joyous laugh and merry repartee, or talking of the deep things of life and eternity, which always entered naturally into Rosamond's conversation, the two spent many a delightful hour together.

One morning, while Rosamond was traversing the walk which led to her cottage, her hands loaded with moss and ferns, she met a little fair-haired, bright-eyed boy of some four years of age, running toward her and exclaiming, "Oh, auntie Rosamon! mamma and I have come!"

Rosamond, with a smile and caress, said, "Mamma and you have come, have you?"

"Yes," he said with childish nonchalance.

Rosamond entered the parlor and cordially greeted Mrs. Munson, the lady whom she met during those years of poverty and struggle, and whose sympathy and cheering words had often fallen like balm upon her desolate heart.

She was a small, dark-haired woman, of pretty piquant face and winning grace of manners, and her fine soprano voice often filled Rosamond's home with melody,

and chased away the sadness that lingered at times, even now.

Mrs. Munson greeted Rosamond with her usual warmth of manner, saying, "I thought Miss Sanford was with you."

"No, she returned home a week ago. I could not persuade her to remain longer. I have been out riding with Carrie Stephens this morning; but remove your hat, and spend the day with me."

"Do, mamma," said little Mortie, and they remained.

Rosamond and Mrs. Munson were soon disturbed in their pleasant conversation by little Mortie's chirping voice.

"See, auntie Rosamon'," and he held up a letter which the servant had carelessly left on the parlor table.

Rosamond glanced at the unfamiliar handwriting with some curiosity, noticed it was post-marked New York, then laid it aside, and little Mortie, unperceived, with a mischievous smile on his face, hid it in the deep folds of the window curtain, and for weeks it was forgotten and unread! That letter contained news which would bring a flush of pleasure to Rosamond's face, and was a forerunner of bright and happy days, such as she had not dreamed of for many a year; yet it lay unheeded for

weeks in its quiet nook mid the folds of the parlor curtain. The housemaid at last discovered it, and laid it on Rosamond's writing-desk, and Rosamond, with wonder and regret that it had been so long mislaid, perused its contents.

CHAPTER XVII.

They tell us oft of the beautiful
That dwells in woman's face ;
Of the soul-lit eye and fairy form,
The poetry of grace.

But vain, I fear, are love's fondest words,
Sweet girl, to tell of thee ;
As pure, as heavenly, beautiful
As poet's dream could be.—MONTRAVILLE.

THE June sun rose from his rose-hued, golden couch in the east, and as he traversed the trackless depths of the azure sky, the earth smiled in welcome. His golden rays touched into rainbow hues the crystal drops of the limpid fountain that graced the lawn of Mr. Rivers' home, a few miles from New York, on the banks of the Hudson. The flowers, fresh from their bath in the morning dews, in coquettish grace shook out their dew-

gemmed robes, fragrant with perfumes, and returned the greeting of the king of day. Birds peeped out of their dewy nests and trilled their morning songs until the air was filled with harmony. The Æolian harp attuned by unseen fingers, lingered in low-toned melody upon the breeze.

The mansion which rose up midst this beautiful Eden, like a castle of modern structure, was soon astir with life, and the joyous laugh and merry voices of children floated out upon the balmy morning air. They soon appear on the broad verandah, a dark-haired, bright-eyed boy, and a sunny-tressed, blue-eyed little girl, clinging to either hand of a young and lovely woman, the golden hair waving back from the sweet face, a face where time has left but a faint trace of his presence. It is Mrs. Rivers, once the winsome Maude Howard, whom Rosamond loved so well in that far-away time. With a smile on her lips she is bidding adieu to the fine looking man she calls husband, who is about starting for the city.

"And, Charlie, bring home some new books when you return this evening."

"Yes ; good-bye," and the handsome grays, pawing the gravelled road with impatient hoof, sped away.

Club rooms have lost all attraction for gifted Charlie Rivers since sweet Maude Howard consented to be his wife.

When the evening shadows began to darken the earth and the busy cares of the day were ended, he remembered her request for new books, and entering a bookstore he selected several highly recommended by the clerk, and then left for home.

Charlie Rivers had known Maude in her father's prosperous days, had often called at the Howard mansion, and was just becoming interested in the golden-haired, sweet-faced girl when the change came into her life. He had lost all trace of her for several years, but one day he accidentally met her on the steps of a friend's house, where she gave music lessons. He renewed his acquaintance, and would not take no for an answer. A few weeks after she became his wife.

The gray horses seemed to travel with winged feet over the few miles that intervened between the city and the Rivers mansion, and he was soon in the cosy parlor, contentment on his face and luxury around him. Maude was seated near, looking over the books he had brought her. She glanced at the rich binding, then at the title page of the first that came to hand and read,

"Margaret, by Rosamond Howard, of Burlington, New York."

With astonishment upon her face she exclaimed, "Why, Charlie! can it be possible!"

"I couldn't say I'm sure, love," he said, with a smile.

She made no reply, but eagerly scanned the pages before her. Not having woman's much abused curiosity he did not interrupt her, but she soon said, "Charlie, do you remember my cousin Rosamond Howard, who visited us the year before papa died?"

"No, I do not; but I have heard you speak of her."

"Yes; well, yet it does not seem possible!"

"What does not seem possible Maude?" curiosity getting the better of him.

"The name of the author of these books is Rosamond Howard. Do you think it possible that it can be my cousin, Charlie?"

"Stranger things have happened."

"Very true, Charlie! I wrote to the village of Lee several years ago, hoping to get some trace of her, but never received an answer. I believe I will write to Burlington to-morrow morning, and find out if it is Rosamond."

"I would Maude, and invite her to spend the summer here."

"So I will, Charlie!"

And the following morning the letter was penned, which had been so carelessly thrown aside unread, and forgotten, for several weeks in Rosamond's home.

Maude impatiently waited for an answer to her letter, and had almost given up all hope of hearing from Rosamond. One evening, in the early part of September, she was on the veranda with Irene, now the rich and beautiful widow, Mrs. Mortimer, waiting as usual for her husband's return from the city.

In due time the ringing hoofs of the grays greeted her ear and he was soon seated by her side, and tossed a letter into her lap with a peculiar smile upon his face, but made no remark.

Maude observed it was post marked Burlington, and eagerly opened and read it, then turning to Irene she said, "Irene, do you remember cousin Rosamond, who visited us before papa died?"

"Yes," she answered in indifferent tones.

"This letter is from her, and she is author of those books in which you have been so deeply interested the last few weeks."

“Indeed ;” and a contemptuous smile curled her lip as she thought of the quiet, sad-faced girl, who had unconsciously frustrated her choicest plans. To her she attributed the blame of her marrying a disagreeable old man for his money. She had dragged out a miserable existence of several years duration in a foreign land, a slave to his whims and fancies, that he might at his death leave her his fortune.

“Will she accept your invitation Maude ?” Mr. Rivers asked.

“No. She says it is impossible this season, as her time will be fully occupied until far into the winter. My letter was accidentally mislaid, or she might have spent a part of the summer with us, but hopes to do so next year. How I wish she could have come this fall,” she continued, with regret in her tones.

“It is just as well,” said Irene, with impatient voice, thinking of a certain dark-haired man, now one of the leading lawyers of New York, whom she hoped to enthrall with her charms during the coming winter ; and she did not care to have again for a rival the quiet, commonplace cousin.

Ah ! Irene Mortimer ! Look well to your charms. Though in all the glory of matured beauty, they may

not compare in the eyes of the man, you would have bow in homage at your feet, with some sweet face which may confront you in his presence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“And she may be humble or proud, my lady,
Or that sweet calm which is just between,
But, whenever she comes, she will find me ready
To do her homage, my queen, my queen !

But she must be courteous, she must be holy,
Pure in spirit, that maiden I love ;
Whether her birth be noble or lowly,
I care no more than the spirit above.”

THE autumn and winter had passed away in a round of pleasant duty to Rosamond, for when the spring time would come again, a book of two volumes of hers had been announced for publication, after which she hoped to rest from her arduous work a few months.

Many cheerful and pleasant friends now relieved the monotony of her life, and among the new ones she met during that last winter she was to spend in Burlington, was Fannie Parker, a tall, stylish girl, with dark brown eyes, full of witcheries for many hearts. She was a girl

of many charming and brilliant qualities, and had Rosamond been poor and unknown, as in the years that were past, and had circumstances brought them in contact, no hand would have been more ready to help the struggling child upward. She helped to cheer many a long winter evening that otherwise might have been lonely to Rosamond.

After Rosamond's winter's work was accomplished, and the waiting world appeased for the present, and spring had flung out her banners of green, gemmed with flowers, she began to make preparations to spend several months with Maude, in her beautiful home on the Hudson.

One bright morning in early June she bade her many Burlington friends adieu, and started on her journey. How much it reminded her of a journey taken some twelve years before, when she went to visit her uncle in New York. Could that little quiet maiden, in its simple travelling suit, with the strange sadness in her face, with earnest eyes looking with enraptured vision upon the world, be the same person that now, in her stylish though plain travelling attire, and dark hat with its drooping plumes, look elegant and grand enough to suit the fastidious taste of Irene Mortimer?

True, the sadness yet lingered upon her face. But a contented happy heart smiled around her lips and looked out of the unfathomable depths of her dark-gray eyes. And it was a fair, noble looking woman that greeted golden-haired Maude in her beautiful home that evening.

When Rosamond, refreshed from her journey, returned to the parlors in a tasty costume of brown silk, relieved by a pink knot at the throat, her rich brown hair wreathed in waves around her face, Maude in her old caressing manner threw an arm around her saying, "You have grown a most lovely woman, Rosamond!"

And with a blush of pleasure Rosamond replied, "Thank you."

"Now, flatterers," cried the voice of Mr. Rivers, from the curtained recess of the window, which they heard with a merry laugh.

Irene Mortimer persistently refused Maude's urgent and oft-repeated request to spend the summer with her, as she did not wish to meet Rosamond. She had about concluded to close her Fifth avenue mansion and remove to Saratoga, when she incidentally heard a friend remark that Mr. Earle intended spending his vacation at the Rivers mansion, on the Hudson. Then, with a

sarcastic smile on her ruby lips, she penned Maude a note saying, "I will be with you within a week."

And the same evening that found Mr. Earle an inmate of the Rivers mansion also found Mrs. Mortimer ensconced in its pleasantest nook.

When, in the evening, Irene Mortimer entered the spacious parlors, her dark beauty, enhanced by her creamy silk, jewels and laces, she could but acknowledge to herself that it was a most lovely woman who met her eye in pale-blue silk, rich laces falling away from her delicate throat and hands, almost her only ornament being a tube-rose mid dewy leaves nestling in the rich brown braids, her sweet face beaming with peace and happiness.

As Irene Mortimer gazed upon her, then at her own showy attire, the contemptuous smile faded from her lips and a pang shot through her selfish heart.

But her attention was soon diverted from Rosamond toward the gentleman just entering the room, and as he saluted Mrs. Rivers, she said, "I wish to introduce a former acquaintance," and taking his arm she crossed the room to where Rosamond was sitting talking with Maude's bright-eyed boy. "Cousin Rosamond, allow me to introduce Mr. Earle. Mr. Earle, Miss Howard."

With the glad expression on his face of one who had been seeking a lost treasure many years, and had at last discovered it, he said, "I am very glad to resume our former acquaintance, Miss Howard."

And the dark blue-gray eyes were raised to his in the fearless light of other days.

Irene, in a distant part of the parlors, surrounded by many admirers, cast furtive glances of jealousy at the unheeding recipients of her malice.

When Mrs. Rivers' guests dispersed for the night, she laid a detaining hand on Rosamond's arm ; and after all had gone, she said, "Do you know, cousin mine, that you have enthralled the lion of New York this evening?"

"No, I was not aware that I had, Maude!" and with a look of wonder on her face she quickly recalled the events of the evening.

"Persevering beauties and manœuvering mammas have tried their best to ensnare Harry Earle for the last ten years, but have not succeeded, and I don't believe in the whole time he has been as devoted to one fair vision of loveliness as he has to you this evening."

"I think you must be mistaken, Maude," Rosamond said, with a flush on her face.

"A woman of my experience mistaken! That

couldn't be, dear." Then with a smile, she added, "Don't trample on your own happiness, Rosamond. Harry Earle is one of the leading lawyers of New York, and is as good and noble as he is gifted ;" but observing the wistful expression of Rosamond's face, she asked, "You are not offended at my words of badinage, Rosamond ?"

"Certainly not, Maude," she replied, kissing her good-night.

The wistful expression deepened on her face as she retired to her room, and recalled the days when Jack Maybee's love had been the richest boon she craved on earth, and when death swept him out of her life she thought love would never again enthrall her heart.

Yet, if it was as Maude divined, could she love this man ? And her heart answered, perhaps, while a smile crept around her lips and shone out of her eyes as she thought of his winning address apparently so full of reverence for true womanhood, and last, although not least, of his handsome face with its dark, eyes with the latent fire of eloquence in their depths.

The days passed into weeks, and he never wavered in his attentions to Rosamond, but was her devoted cavalier on all occasions.

In vain were the witcheries of Irene's dark eyes thrown

around him. Her sweetest smiles and dulcet tones were returned with the most common politeness. Seeing her efforts were futile, with a scornful frown upon her brow, a contemptuous smile on her lips, she bade the inmates of the Rivers mansion adieu, and departed for Saratoga.

Meanwhile, Rosamond accepted, with a deeper pleasure than she would acknowledge to herself, the attentions of Harry Earle, and when at the end of his vacation he returned to his duties in the city, he went with her promise to be his bride.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ 'Tis a time when memory lingers
Across life's dreary track,
The past steals up before me,
The lost come wandering back.”

Most happily the days now went by to Rosamond in the society of Maude, her husband and their lovely children, the other guests having departed when the summer's heat subsided.

One evening, at the close of a warm, delightful October day, while Maude, Mr. Rivers and Rosamond were sit-

ting on the veranda, Mr. Rivers said, "Harry Earle closed the bargain to-day for the Carleton estate up the Hudson."

"O, Rosamond! how delighted I am; you will live within a half mile of us," exclaimed Maude.

And Rosamond, unable to realize that so many blessings of life could ever really be hers, said, "I shall be glad to live near you, Maude."

"One couldn't suppose so, Rosamond, from the tone of your voice."

"I was thinking, Maude, how many bright anticipations had faded out of my life just as they seemed about to be realized, so I dare not hope too much."

"There, no more croaking, Rosamond; it is preposterous with hope beaming like an angel of light from every view. Has your friend, Miss Sanford, consented to be your bridesmaid?"

"Yes, I think I have overruled her objections at last. I couldn't reconcile myself to the thought of having any other friend for bridesmaid—she was the dearest friend of my early youth."

"Yes, and I admire your constancy in clinging to her so many years. And have you not yet decided to be married here, Rosamond?"

"Yes, as you wish it so much. I must return to Burlington next week and dispose of some matters there ; and as I have a letter I wish to answer this evening concerning my return there, I will retire to my room. Good-night."

One day, during her two weeks' stay in Burlington, Rosamond passed the home where Ada Murray had lived and died, and with regret saw the closed shutters and desolate appearance of the house, and the beautiful lawn, once crowned with flowers and shrubs, now overgrown with weeds. While standing at the gate thinking of other days, a travel-stained, heavily bearded man came down the walk.

As he neared her, a familiar movement in his walk reminded her of Will Murray, and when he raised his eyes, she exclaimed, "Will Murray! can it be possible!"

"Yes, and this is Rosamond Howard, if I remember correctly?"

"Yes ; when did you return from Europe?"

"About two weeks ago."

"I regret to see your beautiful home looking so desolate, Will!"

"My life is desolate also."

“But, do you suppose, if Ada could look down from her angel home, and see the home where she spent so many happy hours going to ruin, that she would be glad or sorry?”

“I never thought of it in that way before, Rosamond.”

“I think you would be happier if you would come back and live here, pursuing your work, as in the days when Ada was with you.”

“I believe you are right, Rosamond. It is certain I have not found happiness abroad.”

“I wish you would try it, Will.”

“I think I shall, Rosamond. I hear you have become an authoress of fame since I have been absent, and are about to leave Burlington.”

“An authoress—yes. Come and visit me in my new home.”

“Thank you ; I will do so, Rosamond.”

And Rosamond, bidding him adieu, continued on her walk.

As she passed the room far up above the busily thronged streets, where she had lived, and struggled, and conquered, those years ago, with tear-dimmed eyes she wafted it a voiceless farewell. How little she dreamed

in those lonely, toiling days, what the rewards of her labor were to be. Blessings innumerable in life, and for her soul a rich discipline. The narrow, jagged path is, after all, well worth our climbing.

Rosamond continued her walk until she came to the home of her friend, Fannie Parker, and entering, was cordially greeted by her and her sister.

"Ah! Rosamond Howard! what do you think I have heard about you?" exclaimed Fannie, placing Rosamond in an easy chair.

"Anything very humiliating, Fannie?" she answered with a smile.

"Yes, indeed! that you are soon to be married."

"Oh! is that all, Fannie?" said Rosamond with assumed nonchalance.

"All! I should think it was enough, Rosamond Howard. And you never said 'by your leave' to your dearest friends!"

"Well, I came to see what you would say to cousin Maude's invitation to spend the holidays at her home."

"But when are you to be married, Rosamond?"

"New Year's eve."

"O, I should be delighted to come. Do you suppose I can go?" Fannie said, addressing her sister.

“I know of nothing to prevent your going, Fannie”

“Then if nothing happens I shall come, Rosamond. Will any one else be there from Burlington?”

“I think not. I wished very much to have Carrie Stephens and Mrs. Munson come, but Carrie has a former engagement, she informs me, which cannot very well be broken, and Mrs. Munson expects visitors, so I shall have to wait until I am settled in my home for their coming. And I hope you and your sister will visit me there.” Rosamond bade them adieu; and on the morrow returned to Maude’s home.

CHAPTER XX.

O ! sweet, fond dream of human love.—WHITTIER.

“And thou wert pitiful. I came heart sore
And drank thy cup because earth’s cup ran dry,
Thou slew’st me not for that impiety,
But made the draught so sweet. I thirst no more.”

* THE beautiful stars that Rosamond had loved in her childhood, and whose true and pitying lights shone down upon her in her sorrow, the loved companions of her lonely years of struggle, nodded and smiled from their

dusky thrones, as if in glad approval upon the New Year's eve that saw her a joyful bride.

In the centre of the beautiful, spacious parlors of the Rivers mansion, festooned and wreathed with sweet breathed flowers and trailing evergreens, gathers the bridal group ; while the low-toned cadences of a joyous melody fall upon their ears.

Handsome Harry Earle, with a bright gladness in his face, stands with Rosamond leaning on his arm.

Rosamond's white silk, looped with orange blossoms, sweeps the rich carpet in queenly folds, the bridal veil and orange wreath crown her rich brown wavy hair, her blue-gray eyes filled with intense joyful light, and a smile wreathed her lips.

At her side is Ella Sanford, the friend of her childhood, in a delicate tint of rose-hued silk and delicate laces, which give a rare charm to the wavy blonde hair and pale intellectual face.

Near by stands stylish, queenly Fannie, Parker in wine-colored silk and creamy overdress, creamy laces falling away from her delicate throat and arms, while a diamond star flames mid the dark braids of her hair, throwing the witcheries of her dark-brown eyes over a younger brother of Mr. Earle, an artist.

Maude, sweet, golden-haired Maude, leaning upon her husband's arm, her delicate beauty enhanced by her pale-blue silk and misty laces, her lovely children by her side, views the group with delight beaming from every feature.

At last the solemn words are spoken, and those whose paths separated so strangely are now blended into one.

But where was Irene Mortimer on Rosamond's marriage day?

Resplendent in her rich toilet of ruby velvet and diamonds, her lips wreathed with smiles, she stood the envied queen of a fashionable gathering, her gay laugh and witty repartee ringing down the lofty rooms. But once in her room all changed with Irene.

She dismissed her maid, closely locked her door, and with impatient hands tore the flashing diamonds from her dusky hair and snowy neck, and flung them a burning heap at her feet. Taking off her velvet robe, she tossed it from her with an expression of disgust. Then donning a simple white wrapper, threw herself into a low easy chair and burst into a passion of tears.

She sat then in her lonely home that night, surrounded by the luxury purchased at so dear a price, thinking

with heart-rending anguish, that the man she had loved so many years, was, ere this, the husband of Rosamond Howard.

The sweet hope that had cheered her through all those years was gone.

What permanent happiness had she gained during all these years, thrown out so carelessly upon the sands of time? What true heart could she trustingly call her own?

None, was the wail of her stricken heart.

She might have been surrounded by love and friends, even as Maude and Rosamond, if she had lived their pure, unselfish lives.

A week later, and Irene Mortimer is missed from the halls of fashion. Gone, without even the usual farewell calls fashion requires of its devotees. Gone. None knew whither. But a note found its way to Maude, saying :

Do not be alarmed at any rumors you may hear. I will be with you in a few weeks. Give my love and best wishes to Harry and Rosamond.

IRENE.

In a few weeks, as she had promised, she came to Maude's home. And after kissing her saddened, tear-stained face, Maude said, "My dear sister! where have you been, and what has happened to you?"

"Nothing, Maude, only I have begun my life anew, and I wanted to go away awhile from the curious eyes of the world until I saw my way more clearly," and a smile of peace wreathed her lips and shone from the softened glance of her dark eyes.

Maude threw her arm caressingly around her, saying, "How glad ! how very glad I am, my sister ! my beautiful Irene ! that you have given up your life of fashion. I have noticed for some months that you seemed dissatisfied with it. But where were you on Rosamond's marriage day ? We regretted your absence."

A spasm of pain crossed Irene's face when she replied, "I couldn't come feeling as I did then, Maude ; but it is past, and don't ever mention it again, sweet sister."

"Forgive me, Irene ; I did not know you cared so much. How I wish I could persuade you to remain with us. Charlie and I would be very glad to have you make your home here."

"I think I will, Maude. I feel the need of your sympathy and love."

"And you have it, dear sister."

"Where are Harry and Rosamond now ?" asked Irene, with a look of apprehension, for she did not feel capable of meeting them just yet.

"They returned from their wedding tour, and took possession of their home about a week ago. You know Harry bought the Carleton estate."

Seeing a wistful look on Irene's face, she continued, "Rosamond well deserves her happiness, Irene."

"Yes, Maude ; I see it all now. She is a true, lovely woman, and I am ashamed that I have been so unwilling to acknowledge it all these years, but I mean to redeem my past as much as is possible."

"I have no fear but that you will, Irene ; and I hope we will know and love each other better in the future."

"I mean to deserve your love, sweet sister."

In after years the poor, the homeless and the unfortunate found one of their best friends in Irene Mortimer.

The honored inmate of Maude's beautiful home, amid its simple pleasures and duties, she is finding her happiness.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ And I gave my heart to my lady’s keeping,
And ever her strength on mine shall lean,
And the stars shall fall, and the angels be weeping,
Ere I cease to love her, my queen, my queen ! ”

JUNE, queen month of all the year ! Her royal green robes are trailing over the earth, bordered with bright-hued fragrant flowers, and her queenly brow is crowned with roses. From her delicate hands she scatters dew-drops like glittering diamonds upon the earth, refreshing and beautifying all they touch. Even the poorest receive a token of her passing, if it be but a tiny blade of grass, peeping out from the pavement of the crowded thoroughfare. With lavish hands she has strewn her gifts around the Earle mansion on the banks of the beautiful Hudson.

The roseate hues of the sunset lingers, as if in caress, upon the beautiful landscape, and upon the sweet-faced woman, leaning against the pillars of the piazza.

Can it be the sad-faced little girl we met so many years ago, sitting on the door of the old farm house ? The sad, childish face, raised as now to the glow of the sunset clouds ?

Yes, it it is the same, yet how different then and now ! Then, a lonely sad-faced child, longing for a glimpse of the world of which she had heard. Now, a lovely woman, with the sadness softened into peace upon her face, and the world a well read book.

The ringing hoofs of coming horses arouses her from her reverie, and with a happy smile she greets the fine looking, dark-haired man coming toward her, saying, "Are you not late, Harry ?"

"Yes, Rosamond, I was detained a half hour. Here is a letter for you."

She broke the seal and read it, then said, "Harry, my publishers wish me to write another book."

"But you will not ?" a sly humor in his dark eyes.

"Why not ?" she asked in surprised tones.

"Because I do not wish you to, Rosamond."

"I shall be sorry to thwart your wishes, Harry, but I shall do so, nevertheless."

"But, suppose I forbid you ?" he said in stern tones.

"I shall do so just the same, Harry. It is my life work, appointed me in the vineyard of my Divine Master. Would you have me lay it down an uncrowned victor on the battle ground of life, because the pleasant

places have become my inheritance?" and raised her earnest eyes to his face.

"Well said, my Rosamond! queen of women! You shall earn your crown, and wear it, and I will help at the coronation," he said with a fond look.

"You have already crowned me, Harry!" she replied, with the love-light in her eyes.

"How so, sweet-heart?"

"With your love, my husband!"

"Amen," he said, laying his hand in benediction on her head. Then, with his arm thrown caressingly around her, they entered their home.

And here, as the years go by among the new friends who gather around Rosamond, you will meet from time to time her friends of other days.

Dreamy-eyed Ella Sanford is there. Her pale intellectual face alight with happiness as if the beautiful vision she had seen in the dim future so many years, was at last within her possession. Perchance it is, for she is betrothed to a distinguished gentleman from the great Metropolis.

Rosamond, observing the new happiness on her face, lays a caressing hand upon her wavy blonde hair, saying, "I wish you much joy, my true-hearted friend."

"Thank you, Rosamond," she replied, smiling.

At other times you will meet pretty piquant Mrs. Munson, charming all with her winning grace of manners, her songs one of the rare pleasures in Rosamond's home, and fair-haired, bright-eyed little Mortie, still pursuing his mischievous pranks.

Then again you will see the sweet, winsome face of Carrie Stephens, her gay words and merry laugh ringing out as joy-laden as ever.

Oftener than all of the other-time friends who meet in Rosamond's home, you will see Fannie Parker, the queenly grace of her presence an ornament to the Earle mansion. Frank Earle, brother of Harry Earle, an artist of New York, has chosen dark-eyed Fanny to be queen of his heart and home, and ere many months their marriage will be celebrated.

We often find there golden-haired Maude with her beautiful children. Irene sometimes comes too. You would hardly know her, she has grown so gentle and loving, much to the delight of the children who call her aunt Irene.

They are there now, sitting with Harry Earle and Charlie Rivers on the piazza of Rosamond's home. It is a beautiful evening, and the setting sun bathes them

all in its bright warm glow. Frank Earle and Fannie Parker are sauntering down the walk, arm in arm. Rosamond gazes on the picture they make, and wishes she had the brush of an artist to paint it.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Life, if life is rightly lived,
Is one long vision,
All faculties
Employed as God would have them used, are steps
Upon the stairs by which man climbs to heaven.”

TWENTY years go by with all their changing seasons.

The gay youth and blooming maiden of twenty years ago are now the staid and middle-aged man and matron, and the lisping child has become the youth or maiden, and the devastating scythe, which time wields with unerring sweep, has swept many from the path of life.

Many changes have come to the members of the group that gathered at Rosamond's home that evening so long ago.

Some have gathered there again. There is Maude, not the sweet, winsome Maude of other days, and yet the same. Now silver threads gleam mid the gold of her hair, and her form has lost somewhat the girlish grace

of other years, yet the same happy expression beams from her blue eyes, and smiles around her lips.

At her side sits queenly Irene Mortimer. Time has scarcely left a trace of his presence in her dusky hair, or in the glance of her dark eye, but peace is written on her brow in place of the haughty frown.

Not far distant, Charlie Rivers, now a gray-haired man, yet with somewhat of the olden merry light in his eyes, is conversing with a fine looking, dark-haired youth and lovely, golden-haired maiden who call him "papa."

And Rosamond, brave-hearted Rosamond, stands by the pillar of the piazza, gazing into the sunset clouds as of yore. The roseate light rests as if in benediction upon her sweet face, the high, broad brow crowned with hair silvery-brown, while a holier light beams from the depths of the blue-gray eyes, as of one often looking into the unseen world.

At her side, their arms linked in hers, are two promising looking youths, one dark-haired and dark-eyed, the other has the rich brown hair and blue-gray eyes of Rosamond. They are well worthy their lovely mother.

But what means this black robe with its heavy folds of crape draping Rosamond's fine figure? Ah! it tells but too plainly that Rosamond Earle is a widow.

Harry Earle had become a famous, prosperous lawyer, and filled high places in the land. Death came ere time had scarcely silvered his hair, and with his beloved Rosamond by his side, her hand close clasping his, he went a victor from the battle plains of life with the faith and trust of a little child to meet his God.


When the dearest friend and companion of her life lay dead, Rosamond, strewing the sweet flowers over the form she loved so well, said to her weeping sons, "Carve upon your hearts, my sons, the motto of your noble father, 'Onward and upward,' and victory will be yours, even as it is his."

Her courage never wavered. When the clods of the valley were piled above his grave, she took up her lonely life with a holier light shining from the depths of the blue-gray eyes.

With her dutiful sons at her side, she was content to walk calmly down the vale of years ; while on the heights the star gleams nearer, much nearer, and the shadowy outline of a tender face beaming down, grows more distinct to the watching, waiting eyes of Rosamond Howard Earle.

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